

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY 247

sickly white faces tinder a broken roof of dripping
umbrellas,,
and a^ wonderful phrase flung into the air by
shrill, hysterical
lips—it was really very good in its way, quite a
suggestion.

I thought of telling the prophet that Art had a
soul, but that
man had not. I am afraid, however, he would
not have
understood me."

"Don't Harry. The soul is a terrible reality. It
can be
bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be
poisoned, or
made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us.
I know it."

"Do you feel quite sure of that, Dorian?"

"Quite sure."

"Ah! then it must be an illusion. The things
one feels
absolutely certain about are never true. That is
the fatality
of Faith, and the lesson of Romance. How grave
you are!
Don't be so serious. What have you or I to do
with the
superstitions of our age? No: we have given up
our belief in
the soul. Play me something. Play me a
nocturne, Dorian,
and, as you play, tell me, in a low voice, how you
have kept
your youth. You must have some secret. I am
only ten
years older than you are, and I am wrinkled, and
worn, and
yellow. You are really wonderful, Dorian. You
have never
looked more charming than you do to-night. You
remind me
of the day I saw you first. You were rather cheeky,
very shy,
and absolutely extraordinary. You have changed,
of course,
but not in appearance. I wish you would tell me
your secret.
To get back my youth I would do anything in the
world, except
take exercise, get up early, or be respectable.
Youth! There
is nothing like it. It's absurd to talk of the
ignorance of youth.
The only people to whose opinions I listen now with
any respect
are people much younger than myself. They seem
in front of
me. Life has revealed to them her latest wonder.
As for the
aged, I always contradict the aged. I do it on
principle. If
you ask them their opinion on something that
happened yes-
terday, they solemnly give you the opinions
current in 1820,
when people wore high stocks, believed in
everything, and knew
absolutely nothing. How lovely that thing you
are playing is!
I wonder did Chopin write it at Majorca, with the
sea weeping
round the villa, and the salt spray dashing
against the panes?
It is marvellously romantic. What a blessing it
is that there
is one art left to us that is not imitative 1 Don't
stop. I want
music to-night. It seems to me that you are the
young Apollo,
and that I am Marsyas listening to you. I have
sorrows,

Dorian, of my own, that even you know
nothing of. The